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AHEAD OF 2021 ASSEMBLY WAR, LDF WINS LOCAL BODY BATTLE

The ruling CPM-led Left Democratic Front in Kerala on Wednesday appeared to make a clean sweep of the local body elections

CONG LOSES SHINE, BJP SET TO IMPROVE TALLY

With counting still going on, the LDF was leading in 514 of the total of 941 grama panchayats, 3 corporations and 10 district panchayats. Congress-led United Democratic Front was in the 2nd spot, leading in 375 grama panchayats, 3 corporations and 4 district panchayats. BJP was ahead in 23 panchayats and 2 municipalities against 14 and 1, respectively, in 2015 P7

BEFITTING REPLY TO CENTRE, SAYS VIJAYAN

- In the last local body elections, the Congress had won 365 panchayats, 41 municipalities and two corporations
- Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who has come under a shadow of doubt following the gold smuggling case, said the results are the people's reply to the central agencies trying to "wreck the state"

Apr-May 2021

WHEN ELECTIONS TO THE KERALA ASSEMBLY ARE EXPECTED TO BE HELD

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

SC PANEL IN THE WORKS TO SEEK STIR'S SOLUTION

Fears matters could snowball; impleads 8 farmer unions; extensive hearing today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

WITH the deadlock persisting on the farmers' protest against three contentious farm sector laws, the Supreme Court on Wednesday indicated its intention to set up a committee of all stakeholders to open talks, adding the issue could soon snowball into a national one if not quickly resolved.

"This is what we propose to do tentatively. We will form a committee to resolve this dispute," the bench told solicitor general Tushar Mehta while hearing three petitions related to the protests.

"This panel will comprise members from BKU or any other farmer association that are protesting, government representatives and other farmers groups," the CJI said while issuing notice to the Centre on the three petitions.

As per the order, eight farmer organisations have been included in the case: Bharatiya Kisan Union (Rakesh Tikait), BKU (Sidhupur), BKU (Rajewal), BKU (Lakhowal), Jamhoori Kisan Sabha, BKU (Dakaunda), BKU (Doaba) and Kul Hind Kisan Federation.

Mehta told the bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde that the government is keen on engaging with the farmers, but it can happen only when the other side is open to discuss the laws, clause by clause. Instead, "they come with just one demand of taking back the law," Mehta rued.

At this, CJI Bobde observed, "Your negotiations have not worked apparently." Mehta claimed the agitation had been taken over by vested interests. "Whenever they came to meet our ministers, they carried placards with 'yes' and 'no'. Also, when the ministers spoke to them they turned around in their seats to show their back to the Central ministers," he said.

Delhi government counsel Rahul Mehra batted for the farmers saying they were compelled to protest in winter. "The Centre must do something to resolve their problems," he added. P9

Farmers shout slogans against the new farm sector laws, at the Singhu border in New Delhi on Wednesday | SHEKHAR YADAV

Wary unions want to wait and watch

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

PROTESTING farm unions on Wednesday reacted cautiously to the Supreme Court's proposal to set up a committee to resolve the deadlock over the three contentious farm laws.

While some said they will decide on the court's suggestion only after receiving it in writing and taking legal advice, others claimed the new panel was meaningless since they had already rejected the Centre's proposal to amend the three laws.

Harinder Singh Lakhowal, General Secretary of BKU (Lakhowal) and Omkar Singh, General Secretary of BKU (Rajewal) said, "After discussion among farmer leaders today, it was decided that once we get any notice from the court, we will take legal advice and decide as to what to do."

Forming a new committee at this stage may not work, according to Sukhdev Singh, Punjab General Secretary of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan). "The government should have formed a committee of farmers and others before enacting the new agriculture laws," he said.

Swaraj India chief Yogendra Yadav, who is also a member Sankyukt Kisan Morcha, said the SC can decide the constitutionality of the farm laws but it is not for the judiciary to decide on the feasibility and desirability of these laws. "SC monitored negotiation would be a wrong path," he noted.

Meanwhile, a 65-year-old religious leader Baba Ram Singh shot himself dead at the Singhu border. He reportedly left behind a suicide note in Punjabi saying he took this extreme step as he could no longer see the struggles of the farmers.

AGITATION FIGURED IN TALKS, SAYS RAAB

New Delhi: Visiting British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on Wednesday said he had discussed the ongoing farmers' protests at Delhi's borders with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during their interaction. India, he said, had a "vibrant heritage of peaceful protests", and the United Kingdom respects it | P9

Apple may halt supply to Wistron for code violations

Analysts feel the tech giant may temporarily move manufacturing to another firm in TN

BISMAH MALIK @ Bengaluru

TAIWANESE electronics contract manufacturer Wistron, which has expansion plans in India, may temporarily lose more supply from tech giant Apple over the violation of the company code of conduct after thousands of its employees resorted to violence at it manufacturing facility in Narasapura last week, according to top industry analysts.

Wistron Managing Director Sudipto Gupta, in a letter to the Karnataka Government, dated December 14, stated that the company is committed to its over $250 million electronic manufacturing plan in India , which is a key to its global plans, and looks to expand its presence in this very important market.

"We bring the best of practices worldwide to our plant and operations and want to protect workers' interests. We will work together with the State Government to ensure that plant operations are resumed at the earliest," Gupta said in his letter.

He added that Wistron is deeply distressed by the recent incidents that took place at the Narasapura facility. P7

Not ₹437 cr, iPhone maker scales down loss to ₹41.25 cr

BALA CHAUHAN & V VELAYUDHAM @ Bengaluru, Kolar

IN an important development, the Taiwanese iPhone manufacturer Wistron has scaled down the extent of damage at its Narasapura facility near Kolar to ₹41.25 crore from the previously stated ₹437 crore. The company issued a fresh letter to the Vemgal police in this regard on Tuesday evening.

Ironically, a day before the violence, on December 11, a Taiwanese delegation, led by Director-General of Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC) Ben Wang, had met Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar and had expressed keenness to discuss investment plans in Karnataka. The Wistron violence has come at a time when India is being touted as an alternative destination to China in the global supply chain of various products including electronic equipment. P7

List of trusted telecom sources to be out soon, blocking Chinese firms

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

AFTER taking a slew of steps against Chinese mobile apps, India will soon come out with a list of 'trusted sources', only from whom can telecom equipment be purchased by service providers.

Senior officials said the move is aimed at building indigenous capacity in the manufacturing of the telecom equipment, and cut down on the dependency on imports.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday decided that a panel headed by the deputy national security advisor will prepare the 'trusted sources' list, which seeks to secure India's communication network. The panel will also prepare a 'negative list' of companies, whose products will not be allowed in the country. The black list is likely to contain Chinese firms.

The National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector, cleared by the CCA, directs all service providers to mandatorily source equipment from "trusted sources". However, it will not affect equipment that have already been deployed.

"The CCS has approved the directive in line with the needs of the national security, and accordingly the National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector has been given the nod," said Union law and Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

The directive has provisions to qualify telecom gears made by domestic players in the trusted category, while those that meet the criteria of the DoT's "preferential market access scheme" will be certified as India trusted sources.

Next round of spectrum sale

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal for the auction of 2,251.25 megahertz of spectrum worth ₹3.92 lakh crore. The sale will be held in March 2021 | P13

EXPRESS READ

SC collegium transfers 4 HC CJs

New Delhi: The Supreme Court collegium has recommended to the Centre the transfer of four Chief Justices of high courts including Andhra Pradesh High Court's Chief Justice J K Maheshwari to the Sikkim High Court, weeks after CM Jagan Mohan Reddy had complained to the CJI about the state's top judiciary. P10

CM pitches for more investment

Bengaluru: Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday sought the industry's cooperation to make Karnataka the top investment destination in the country. The government has initiated a slew of measures to improve ease of doing business in the state, and industries should help in their effective implementation, he added. P4

RIGHTS OF DAUGHTER

HC: Can't deny job to married girl on compassionate grounds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

EVEN a married daughter of a deceased government employee can be considered for a compassionate appointment, the Karnataka High Court has ruled.

It held that excluding a married daughter on such grounds was illegal and unconstitutional. Allowing the petition filed by Bhuavaneshwari V Puranik on Tuesday, Justice M Nagaprasanna struck down the word "unmarried" in Rule 2(1)(a)(i), Rule 2(1)(b) and Rule 3(2)(i)(c) of the Rules, 1996, as it is violative of Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution. He directed the state government to consider the petitioner's claim and pass an appropriate order within a month. The judge noted that if the Rule was left as it was, it would create discrimination on the basis of gender. If the marital status of a son does not make any difference in law to his entitlement for seeking appointment on compassionate grounds, the marital status of a daughter too should make no difference, the judge said.

Observing that marriage does not determine the continuance of a relationship between parent and child, the judge said a married daughter does not cease to be part of the family and law cannot make an assumption that a married son alone continues to be part of the family. P7

"The interpretation of law has always undergone a change with changing times. This case is a classic example of how law is anachronistic in terms of the Rules"

Justice M Nagaprasanna

MARCH TO CHITTAGONG

On the road to victory, they soldiered on

Members of the Special Frontier Force, including soldiers from Tibet, during the 1971 India-Pakistan War, in this dated photograph | FILE

AMIT S UPADHYE @ Mundgod

IT was not their war. But they fought and laid down their lives for our country. Hundreds of soldiers of Tibetan origin, who were part of Special Frontier Force (SFF), fought along with the Indian Army in the 1971 war. They also became an important part in the Bangla Liberation War.

In the last five decades, about 53 Tibetan soldiers have laid down their lives on the front lines. On the occasion of Vijay Diwas on Wednesday, 36 war veterans paid their respect to those who lost their lives in the war. They gathered at the war memorial at Doeguling Tibetan Settlement in Mundgod of Uttara Kannada district. The programme was led by Lhagpa Tsering, who is the Tibetan Settlement Officer of Mundgod.

Soon after the SFF was formed, many of the young soldiers in their early 20s, set off to fight the Pakistani Army from the northern parts of present Bangladesh. "When we reached Chittagong Hill Tracts region via Guwahati, we were confronted with the Pathan Regiment of the Pakistan Army. We were able to take over the post in less than 30 minutes," recalled Tsering Choephel, Assistant Political Leader, SFF, Mundgod. P5